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PRESS ADVISORY

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Secretary of Defense William Perry will brief the media on his upcoming weekend inspection visit to Goma and Entebbe at 2 p.m. today in the Department of Defense Briefing Room, 1E805.

Media interested in covering this event may contact LTC David Sims at (703) 697-5131 or for audio-visual coverage, Jim Kout at (703) 695-0168.

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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
BRIEFING FOR THE MEDIA ON FUTURE VISIT TO RWANDA, WITH LT. GEN. JOHN
SHEEHAN, USMC, J-3, JCS
PENTAGON
JULY 27, 1994

Ms. deLaski: Good afternoon.

Dr. Perry has agreed to come down and tell you a little bit about his trip and some other update information on the situation and the relief effort relating to Rwanda. If you have some real specific detail questions we also have General Sheehan back by popular demand. With that, I'll turn it over to Dr. Perry.

Secretary Perry: Thank you, Kathleen.

We see in and around Rwanda today a humanitarian tragedy of unprecedented proportions--because of the distance involved from where relief supplies are available, because of the number of people involved, and because of the time urgency of dealing with it.

The United States military has the only capability in the world that is capable of responding adequately to that need. Therefore, last week, the President directed the Defense Department to proceed with its humanitarian relief program.

Because of the complexity of the logistics operations involved and the difficulty of executing it, we see this as a very demanding management problem. Therefore, the President has further asked me to personally inspect our ongoing operations in Entebbe and in Goma. I will be doing that this weekend, and then report back to the President on Monday.

I will be meeting General [George] Joulwan in Europe, and be flying to Entebbe with him. There we will meet [Lt] General [Daniel] Schroeder, who is the

senior field commander of the operation, and we'll meet [Brig Gen] General Jack Nix in Goma.

Our intent is to assess the situation both in Entebbe and in Goma, review their plans, and provide what management support we can, to facilitate the operations underway there.

You've all seen some of the ongoing reports about what is going on there in the last few days. To summarize a few major points, we have already delivered the first five sets of water purification equipment and are currently producing almost one hundred thousand gallons a day. To put that in perspective, for humanitarian operations of this sort, about a liter a day is the minimum required for each refugee. So, one hundred thousand gallons of water a day is a major contribution, but it still doesn't provide enough water for all of the refugees who are in Goma today.

More equipment is on the way. In fact, some of it is arriving this very day. We expect, in a day or two, to be producing in excess of a million gallons of water a day. And that will be adequate for the Goma area.

I might say that producing the water is only part of the problem. We also have to have the storage and distribution system for it. That is proceeding in parallel with getting the water purification system in place.

We have now about 750 people on the ground in the area, and that number could go up to about 4,000 within the next week or so. Additional airlifts of food, trucks, trailers, medical supplies, and water are continuing.

One of the biggest problems in building up faster has been the limited capacity of the airfield at Goma. So, in parallel with moving equipment in, we've had operations underway to increase the capacity of the Goma airport. That has included making provisions for night operations. And [the] United States [has] supplied forklifts there so that we could speed up the unloading of the airplanes thereby increasing the number of airplane landings a day we can get [in].

We've gone from roughly ten airplanes a day to twenty airplanes a day capacity as a result of the changes we've made so far.

In that respect, I might say that in our trip over the weekend, we will be flying in our regular aircraft to Entebbe. And then if, as we expect, there's still a limited capacity to accept aircraft at Goma, I will hitch a ride in with one of the mission aircraft that are flying food in because we do not want to divert a mission aircraft from landing there. As of today, at least, that's a limiting capacity on how much relief aid we can deliver.

I would like to clear up some misleading press reports that have come out about U.S. forces in Rwanda relative to the future effort there. The press reports that have come in from Entebbe have given the impression that we are in the process of moving our headquarters from Entebbe to Kigali and setting up humanitarian way stations in Rwanda. That is not an accurate reporting.

This is a proposal which General Joulwan and our people on the ground are looking into, but we have not made a final decision yet to execute that plan. So that would be some number of days away--if we make the decision to execute it.

We do have a small assessment team in Kigali to make the security and infrastructure assessment. And a larger assessment team may go in tomorrow. But the purpose of these teams is simply to tell us how they would execute a plan if we decide to do it.

That sums up the points that I wanted to make to you about the plans for our trip, and a brief status report on what's going on in Rwanda today. I am available for a few questions.

Q: Is there any possibility that you will include a stop in Kigali on this trip? And parenthetic to that, there seems to be a little reluctance on the part of administration officials to set up way stations in Rwanda. There seems to be sort of a qualifying series of statements. Is it because of the difficulty of getting the new government in power to go along and cooperate?

A: I'm not now planning to stop at Kigali on this trip. I could reevaluate that at the end of the week--depending on what our assessment teams are reporting at that time and what kind of progress we've made in discussions with the acting government in Rwanda today.

I don't see the hesitation on the way stations. We think it's an excellent idea, but it's a very complex idea because it would involve, obviously, authority from the Rwandan government. It would be inextricably mixed with peacekeeping operations that are going on in that area. And you have to take very careful consideration of how to provide security for the people who are manning the way stations.

Finally, I would note that if a way station plan would be implemented, it would be an international operation. So you'd have to do the coordination with the other countries that would be involved in it. So, it's a premature report.

Q: To follow up on that--I guess I didn't phrase it very well. But is there a fairly high level of cooperation from the new government in Rwanda? Or is there a lack of cooperation? How would you assess it at this point, sir?

A: On the specific issue with which we have been working with them--which is the access to the airport and sending the survey teams in--there's been good cooperation.

Q: Mr. Secretary, on this proposal that you're looking into for these way stations, can you give us any idea how many U.S. troops would be deployed in Kigali if this were to come about? There must be some sort of working number that you have in mind.

A: No, I don't have one, Jamie. Even if it were possible at this stage to estimate how many total people would be involved in the whole operation, we're looking at it as an international operation that involves contributions from other countries. That whole coordination--that whole planning activity--simply hasn't been done yet. So, this story is quite premature--well ahead of where we are in the planning now.

Q: Dr. Perry, while you've said no final decision has been made on whether to send U.S. troops into Rwanda, do you think they will, in fact, be sent?

A: We already have, of course, a survey team in Kigali. There are real advantages to having Kigali as a hub for the airport operations. So, if the engineering and logistical assessments turn out to be promising, and if the government continues their cooperation, then it's entirely possible that we will want to establish Kigali as a hub--being close to the areas that are affected. It would just make practical logistic sense.

Q: You mentioned that within a week or so, you think there may be 4,000 people involved in the effort. Are you speaking then of outside of Rwanda? In Zaire, Entebbe...

A: In the whole relief operation--without trying to specify where they would be located. This is the whole set of people that would be involved in assisting in the operations I have described to you that we've committed to do already. The whole set of things of getting the water purification and the medical assistance and the engineering assistance--all of those programs which we've already undertaken--could easily involve up to 4,000 people.

Q: So, you're saying that should the way station plan move forward sometime in the future that number then could be...

A: That number does not include the possibility of establishing way stations.

Q: Do you have any estimate at all of what it might take once that...

A: I don't. I couldn't even guess at how many U.S. forces might be involved in that because we would see that primarily as an international operation.

Q: Mr. Secretary, in your own mind, what measurement, what standards, will you use in determining when U.S. troops could depart the region? How do you know when you've done enough?

A: When you separate out the operations we are committed to conduct and are executing right now, [they] are humanitarian operations, relief operations. The French and UN are working on a peacekeeping operation which is a different operation. We support that through the UN, but we have not provided and are not planning to provide troops to that operation -- the peacekeeping operation.

With that background, to get back to your question, it's when we think we have done what we need to do relative to the humanitarian operation. First of all, we have to reach the stage where we have made pure water available to the refugees in the various locations there. We will reach that stage fairly quickly in Goma, but we will be then looking to Bukavu and seeing if we ought not to be providing a similar capability down there.

A real test of the success of this whole operation, though, will be refugees going back to Rwanda--going back to their farms and their homes. But the humanitarian operation by itself cannot assure that. That also takes political resolution in Rwanda and it takes actions of peacekeeping forces. So you have to look at both the peacekeeping operations and the humanitarian operations together to try to get an assessment for that answer.

Q: What's the latest you've heard on refugee flow back into Rwanda?

A: I've seen figures--which I'm not sure how reliable they are, Eric--but there are some flowing back into Rwanda now. But as I understand it, it's a very small percentage and it's not really relieving the situation in any notable way. It is promising, though, that some of the refugees, at least, have already started the move back in.

Q: Mr. Secretary, you mentioned that you'll be meeting on the plane with General Joulwan. Will you be also discussing Bosnia? And can you tell us anything about what the concerns are about the deteriorating situation there? I understand there was a call for possible close air support today by the UN.

A: Yes, I'm sure that when General Joulwan and I are riding in the plane from Europe down to Entebbe we will be discussing the situation in Bosnia as well. We are deeply concerned about what appears to be a pattern of Bosnian Serb provocations. Going back to over a week now, it's included firing on relief aircraft using the Sarajevo airport; moving heavy weaponry around the Gorazde exclusion zone; sniping at civilians in Sarajevo. Yesterday the Serbs announced that they would restrict civilian traffic to and from Sarajevo. Today there was an attack on a British UNPROFOR convoy near Mount Igman.

I don't want to speculate on what the Serbs' motives might be, but I do note that these provocations violate the nationwide cease-fire agreement which was agreed to by both parties. And the action around Gorazde violates the exclusion zone that was imposed by NATO some months ago.

NATO and UNPROFOR are consulting on these developments. NATO stands ready to provide the close air support if it is requested from the UNPROFOR. We in the United States will press for the strict implementation of NATO's decisions on the enforcement of those exclusion zones.

Q: I was wondering, Mr. Secretary, if the effort to get the refugees to move back into Rwanda isn't successful quickly, the consensus is that they might be at these refugee camps for as much as a year. Would United States troops, there to assist in humanitarian efforts, have to remain for the entire time--for up to a year?

A: I don't see the effort as being that long a duration, but it's very difficult to estimate at this early stage. We see our effort in Goma, for example, as an emergency effort to relieve a desperate current situation that requires political and peacekeeping action in Rwanda to start drawing the refugees back. The solution to the problem is not making a long term camp in Goma, but having the refugees go back into Rwanda to their homes and farms. In order for that to happen, there have to be political and peacekeeping operations which are beyond the operation we're involved with right now. But we see our operation as strictly an emergency operation to help out with this humanitarian crisis.

Q: The commanders on the ground in Africa yesterday seemed to be giving the impression that a move into Rwanda was imminent, but you said that's premature?

A: That's premature, yes.

Q: Can you just outline what would prevent such a move, or what the outstanding questions or obstacles are?

A: As far as moving into the Kigali airport, there's an obvious advantage to being there in terms of location and proximity to the areas where the relief is needed. What we're looking at now are the logistics and engineering factors about using that airport. How many airplanes per day can we bring in, what the runway capacity is, what kind of navigation aids. These are all nuts and bolts kind of assessments being made there.

Q: Is the reason why it's premature is that those questions aren't answered?

A: In addition, in Rwanda we have to get, obviously, the ongoing cooperation and support of the existing government for this to proceed. So far, they have been fully cooperating with what we're going to do.

I might make one other comment before I leave--having to do with the question raised about Sarajevo and Bosnia. I should remind you that whatever is happening in Sarajevo today, we remain firmly committed to the Contact Group's effort to try to establish a negotiated settlement in Bosnia. That still has to be underlying whatever response we take to particular events today or yesterday.

The Bosnian Serbs have rejected the proposal of the Contact Group. And yesterday, and again today, representatives of the Russian government have been meeting with representatives from the Serbian and the Bosnian Serb government to try to persuade them to come around to accept that proposal.

As you, I believe, know, Secretary Christopher will be meeting in Geneva with the foreign ministers from the Contact Group nations this Saturday to consider what consequences will be applied to the Bosnian Serbs if they do not come around to accepting the plan by Saturday.

Our position has been clear. There will be consequences if the Bosnian Serbs continue to reject this proposal. And that could include a further tightening of economic sanctions; stricter enforcement by NATO aircraft of the exclusion zones; extension of the exclusion zones; and finally, if these measures fail, we would consider the pressure for multilateral lifting of the arms embargo to be irresistible.

Q: Do you take seriously this North Korean defector's comments that North Korea has developed five nuclear weapons? And do you intend to raise this in your talks?

A: We do take it seriously. We have not changed our estimate on the basis of that input. We still hold to our estimate that it's more likely one or two nuclear bombs. The range of uncertainty here has to do not only with how many kilograms of plutonium the North Koreans have been able to produce so far--and there is a range of uncertainty in that estimate--but more importantly, a difference between two bombs and five bombs could simply be reflected by different estimates on how efficient the technology for converting plutonium to bombs was. If they had a very advanced technology, they could make five bombs out of the amount of plutonium we estimated they have.

Our estimate assumed they did not have that advanced technology, and therefore, would be only able to make one or two bombs. So you have this range of uncertainties in the estimate.

On balance, we've taken it seriously, we've looked at that report, and we have no basis for changing our estimate at this time.

Thank you very much.

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